# Klan-Linked Lawyer, Ray To Confer

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By FRANK RITTER

J. B. Stoner, a Georgia lawyer long associated with Ku Klux Klan causes, reportedly will confer today with James Earl Ray about Ray's efforts to win a new trial.

Edward Fields, an associate of Stoner's, said Ray wrote to the attorney this week to seek assistance in changing his plea to innocent in the murder of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

STONER WAS scheduled to arrive in Nashville early today. He stopped in Chattanooga last night to confer with a friend, attorney Robert Hill Jr. Mrs. Hill said her husband will accompany Stoner to the prison today.

Interviewed last night by newsmen as he stopped in Chattanooga, Stoner said he is not in a position to say anything about what he will do for Ray "because I haven't reached the stage yet where I can." However, he added:

"I think Mr. Ray is a victim of a conspiracy, certainly certain magazines are part of a conspiracy to libel him and deprive him of a fair trial. And they apparently did succeed with their libel into pressuring him into a plea when otherwise there was no apparent reason for it."

"I KNOW quite a few people in Memphis and on the basis of limited information I think that it would be impossible for Mr. Ray to be guilty of having shot King."

Ray was sentenced to 99 years in prison after he pleaded guilty March 10 to last April's sniper-slaying of King in Memphis. However, he was reported to have told officers who accompanied him from Memphis to Nashville that he had changed his mind and wished he had gone to trial.

Earlier this week, Memphis Criminal Court Judge Preston Battle said Ray had written to him, asking for a post-conviction hearing and serving notice that Percy Foreman was no longer his attorney.

"MR. STONER received a letter from Ray since Monday," Battle said yesterday. The letter said that Ray wanted to dismiss Mr. Foreman ... plea to not

LAKE RUSSELL, warden of the penitentiary here, said yesterday he has not been contacted by Stoner but that the attorney will have no trouble seeing Ray if the prisoner requests it.

In other developments yesterday, Ray's former attorney, Arthur Hanes of Birmingham, intimated that he may also come to Nashville this weekend to see Ray.

Hanes added quickly, however, that "under no circumstances will I become involved in the case with J. B. Stoner." The Alabama lawyer said he recently received a lengthy letter from Ray but declined to say what it contained.

Hanes added:

"IF HE'S hired Stoner, I don't have anything to do with it. I've already told him (Ray). James Earl knows how I feel about it."

Asst. State Atty. Gen. Thomas Fox said yesterday that Ray, under Tennessee law, could seek a new trial even though he pleaded guilty and signed a waiver of appeal.

"All he would have to do," Fox said, "is say he is changing his mind and is seeking relief."

FOX SAID that among legal maneuvers open to Ray, under the law are:

"He could apply to the trial ... to change his plea. He ...

... ler. I don't think ...," added. "I think Ray ... probably have to go thr... a post conviction crim... ceeding.

"IN MOST cases ... prisoner asks that ... be set aside ...